

## **Behind the numbers**

The federal budget cut payments to residential aged care providers by \$1.2 billion over four years to help curb a predicted \$3.8 billion blowout in costs.

Aged care providers are predictably up in arms. Unfortunately, government subsidies often serve the interests of the providers more than residents.

Under the current arrangements, the providers do their own assessments of residents. When a resident is reclassified as requiring a higher level of care, the provider receives more money from the government. However, staff levels rarely change nor are extra services provided to the resident. One in eight claims submitted by providers are reportedly incorrect.

The Aged Care Funding Instrument is based on residents' level of care rather than "restorative care". There is no financial incentive for providers to introduce services such as strength training or lifestyle programs that would improve residents' quality of life. The funding of aged care homes requires greater scrutiny and transparency to ensure the best possible care for frail, elderly people.

**Sarah Russell, Northcote**